

# Have You Been Blackmailed With Bukhari Yet?

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Many great scholars of Islam have taken a great deal of time and trouble to explain the correct approach towards hadith which are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as well as the application thereof. Extensive volumes have been written, and in all orthodox schools and seminaries of Islam, the study of ‘Usool (principles) of Hadith’ is mandatory before progressing to higher studies. The subject is so important that the earliest surviving schools (the Hanafi, from the time of the tabaeen – successors to the companions of the Prophet (SAW) and the Malikis, from the generation after that) were at great pains both to collect hadith and regulate and limit their application in the appropriate ways.

Your problem however, most likely, will begin with the above paragraph.

You, if you are a lay Muslim, probably consider the collections of ‘Sahih Bukhari’ and ‘Muslim’ to be the earliest, most authoritative or ‘canonical’ collections of hadith or alleged sayings of the Prophet. In fact, the earliest collection of hadith is by the Hanafis, and then the famous ‘Muwatta’ of Imam Malik. The very first book written after the generation of the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) was the ‘Kitab Al Athar’ of the Hanafis, containing numerous hadith, and as with the ‘Muwatta’ of Malik, with very short chains as well as their application to jurisprudential considerations.

Hardly anyone today in the UK knows this though.

The reason is that today we have a highly heterodox approach to the hadith being expounded by two widespread and well funded groups who would like to claim the field for themselves.

These people would like to take a hadith and settle a given matter by it alone. For example, there is the eponymous ‘blackmail by Bukhari’, in which an unsuspecting person will be confronted by someone, usually without any kind of Islamic schooling apart from perhaps the ability to read Arabic (often poorly), who nonetheless will try to accost them with the information that; ‘brother/sister, hadith is sahih/in Bukhari, how dare you not act on it?’

The necessity for having a grounding in fiqh and Islamic sciences and above all the Quran before one can extract rulings or even the Sunnah itself from the Hadith has been emphasised almost ad nauseum by the notable scholars of Islam past and present.

However, today the situation is acute and the lay people (Muslims and others) need a shield against the misguidance that can result from people being told to follow narrations directly or simply because they are in the canonical collections. Further, we are giving an excellent weapon to the enemies of Islam by insisting on traditions which either the scholars of fiqh (law or jurisprudence) or Aqeedah (belief or creed) rejected, despite their being classed as Sahih or in Bukhari, or at the very least did not take literally.

The individuals and organisations spreading this misguidance hide under a false banner of orthodoxy or by accusing their Sunni challengers of ‘hadith rejection’ or sectarianism. The main groups responsible are ‘Ahl al Hadith’ (‘people of hadith’) and the associated Salafi movement. It is necessary to highlight at the very outset what the approach of both Sunni Islam and these groups in fact is before going into details – this is because any attempt to rectify these ideas results in a deliberate failure of these mentioned groups to state their *actual* position towards hadith and the subsequent confusion of the masses and in particular converts to Islam, from whom we receive many correspondences requesting help with this issue.

In summary, the position of Sunni Muslims, as stated by both hadith masters such as Ibn Hajar, Al Nawawi and more importantly the doctors of law and belief such as Abu Hanifa and Malik and Shafi is that the Quran is certain knowledge because it is mass transmitted (‘muttawatir’) without the possibility of error: essentially, the Quran is narrated by so many different people who did not know each other and could not have collaborated in a lie that it is habitually impossible for it to have been fabricated – and this goes for all of the different recitations too. It is logically equivalent to a conspiracy of Medieval English people fabricating the existence of

London and this never was exposed. So a good definition of muttawatir is ‘mass transmitted without the possibility of error’. Besides the Quran, there are other muttawatir transmissions, a few in the hadith (such as ‘Whoever lies on behalf of me [The Prophet], let him prepare his place in Hellfire’) and also outside the hadith, such as in the books of fiqh in issues such as how to pray.

Muhaditheen such as Imam Bukhari do not concern themselves with the ‘chains of transmission’ or ‘Isnads’ of Muttawatir narrations – this is because they are certain, profuse and investigating them is of no use.

But besides the Quran and Muttawatir hadith and narrations, there are some 1,000,000 more Hadith (reported sayings or actions of the Prophet (SAW)). If we exclude variant chains with the same text, we still have 300,000. If we take those graded as ‘Sahih’ by for example the Shafis, who have a more lenient and inclusive ‘Mustalah of Hadith’ (methodology of Hadith) than the Malikis or Hanafis, then we are left with, say, 20,000 narrations attributed to the Prophet (SAW) which may be ‘sahih’/authentic *in chain* (isnad).

Virtually none of these 20,000 or so are muttawatir and the vast majority are ‘ahad’ (narrated singly, from a single witness). Further, most are narrated by meaning as opposed to verbatim (thus they can contain grammatical errors, which the verbatim speech of the Prophet would not, due to his perfect diction in Arabic).

But the chain (‘isnad’) isn’t everything: we have to look at the content (‘matn’) as well. Once we have found the isnad to be valid, we then examine the text of the narration itself.

Scholars who study the Sunna have laid down many criteria for the study of hadith from the very inclusive (such as the Hanbali school) to the very cautious (Malikis and Hanafis), with the Shafis somewhere in between. The approach to hadith by experts of the Sunnah is often summarised in five points which are widely recognised:

- 1) *An isnad (chain of narration) comprised of transmitters with good memory and exact recollection*

- 2) *An intelligent grasp of what they are narrating as well as unimpeachable morals – and this must be attested to.*
- 3) *These two qualities must be applied to each person in the chain – whether it is three people or seven. If anyone is lacking, the hadith becomes less than sound.*

Once we have found the Isnad to be valid, we then examine the text of the narration itself:

- 4) *It must not be aberrant (for example, by contradicting the Quran, or a Muttawatir hadith or a more reliable report etc)*
- 5) *It must not have a fault rendering it unacceptable*

The different usool of hadith then go on to elucidate these matters as well as the types of chains that can be accepted, and many of the differences in practices and creed between the schools of Islam depend on which hadiths they do and do not accept.

This is already a huge problem for Ahl al Hadith – since they would like to decide the authenticity of a narration by its chain of transmission alone, regardless of the content of the actual narration. If, when they tell you a hadith is ‘Sahih’, you ask them ‘Sahih in chain (isnad) or content (matn) or both?’, they will react with anger and confusion, as for them, the content is not even secondary: the chain is king.

There are many different terminologies used in the grading of hadith and they vary according to which method one follows – all of the groups have different methods and variant terms (the Malikis do not accept Hadith that are Sahih but clash with the practice of the inhabitants of Medina at the time of Imam Malik, Hanafis do not take Sahih hadith if they clash with Quran or rationality, Shafi will take them if they meet his ‘five conditions’ which are similar to those of Imam Bukhari) but an important third ‘grade’ of hadith is ‘Mashoor’ or ‘famous’. This is again another narration type and has different definitions in the different groups but in short it is more likely than ahad to be true – by being closer to ‘muttawatir’ due to its acceptance by early generations or Companions despite not initially being mass narrated.

And now we come to the important part: Muttawatir narrations, be they Quran or hadith are regarded as ‘certain’ by the ijma/consensus of Muslims (not only scholars) and logical, habitual necessity. ‘Mashoor’ are regarded as ‘Ilm ul Tomaneenah’ (or ‘very likely’) and Ahad with an perfect chain are regarded as ‘Ilm ul Zann’ (probable, or a better translation is ‘maybe, maybe not’, or as hadith master Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani puts it in his introduction to his commentary on Sahih Al Bukhari ‘Fath Al Bari’, ’50/50’). No one in Sunni Islam says that Ahad hadith are *certainly* attributable to the Prophet. In fact, to assert this would be a heresy (‘Bidat’). But Ahl Al Hadith and Salafis, despite their insistence to the contrary. do not in fact follow Sunni Islam.

And this last part, namely that ahad narrations (i.e. essentially all of the contents of Bukhari, Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Musnad Imam Ahmad etc) are not certain is what groups such as Ahl Al Hadith and Salafis do not like: they would, to varying degrees of disagreement amongst themselves, like it if an ahad hadith (single chain narration) that was authentic *in chain* would be considered as ‘certain knowledge’ i.e. in the same way as the Quran or Muttawatir hadith and thus be acted on.

Some of them will say this openly, but others will deny it by arguing that they (for example Salafis) *do* have principles or usool of hadith, but in practice, these mean checking the chains of narrations and then comparing them to Bukhari and giving preference to Bukhari over Muslim, Muslim over Tirmidhi etc, and not whether the imams of fiqh took these into account when making rulings. Further, these people usually will not check them against Quran and insist that ahad narrations can specify or even abrogate the Quran – and most importantly that they can be taken into belief – i.e. matters which cannot certainly be proved to be part of what the Prophet passed on should be treated as so and taken into creed. There are various glosses and a lot of ‘smoke and mirrors’ with all of this, but that is what their approach amounts to.

It goes without saying, this is not the approach of Sunni Islam.

Nor even Twelver Shi’ism.

Of course, these people, claiming to be ‘Ahl al Hadith’ or the party of hadith claim that *they* posses the correct methodology and that it is the other groups that are heterodox. These

people are very hostile to those who do not accept their version of hadith studies (or rather, lack of hadith studies), even if they are from the Salaf such as Abu Hanifa or Malik. However, because of the prestige those leaders or ‘Imams’ enjoy in Muslim communities, their periodic attacks on their scholarship are met with a harsh response. More on this later.

In fact, the dispute is an old one as many converts who were led to serious strife by the question of the correct approach to hadith have realised (for example, Lang in his masterpiece – and I do not use that term lightly – *‘Losing My Religion’*). There has been a long standing conflict between the people of hadith and the people of fiqh: Abu Hanifa was accused of being both ignorant of hadith and of rejecting them – because to these people, rejecting a hadith that is ‘sahih’ in terms of its chain is an impossibility (though as we will see, out of necessity, they are often forced to do so, in which case they usually try to pretend that there was some problem with its chain, even if the chain was authenticated by Bukhari or Muslim).

It is shocking for many Muslims who have been ‘blackmailed by hadith’ to note that many muhadditheen, including some of the most well known such as Imam Bukhari and Imam Ahmad, disparaged the jurists in the strongest terms. One can see that Bukhari hardly narrates from either Imam Abu Hanifa or Malik. And how is it that the earliest book of hadith, by one of the people who set up hadith studies in the first place, Imam Malik’s ‘Muwwata’, is *not* considered one of the reliable books of hadith and not in the ‘six sahihs’?

The inescapable conclusion is that the imams of fiqh were useless in hadith.

Or that the muhaditheen sometimes went overboard in their zeal, as we shall come to see soon.

One of the tricks used by Salafists to avoid openly insulting the Imams Malik and Abu Hanifa in particular is to insist that the scholars of hadith, despite their limited specialisation and competence (namely in Hadith only) should nonetheless be given priority about what is and is not ‘Islam’ and to imply that people like Abu Hanifa were ‘Imams’ in name only but lacked all competence in Hadith. This is a most dangerous method: Imams of hadith sometimes disparaged doctors of creed and law by narrating that some only knew five hadith (**i**) and other Muhaditheen went so far as to accuse people like Abu Hanifa or Malik of apostasy (**ii**).

So by demanding that you follow the narrations of their *select* and sectarian muhaditheen alone, they are in fact opening the door to you disparaging the fuqaha and even accusing them of kufr. Of course, they do not want to come out and say this as the large number of individuals and sects from the subcontinent in the UK will react harshly, since they tend to respect Abu Hanifa.

They are in fact trying to revive an old issue, already resolved in Sunni Islam until billions petrodollars flowed into mosques and publishing houses around the world to imbibe their heresy into the beliefs of ordinary Muslims – and if it means accusing people like Malik or Abu Hanifa of multiple apostasies or endangering the faith of lay Muslims and arming Christian or atheist missionaries by reviving neglected and rejected hadith, then so be it (iii).

Further, they are forcing, again in a stealth way, people to ‘choose’ between the Salaf such as Abu Hanifa and eminent Imams of hadith such as Bukhari: apart from the fact that this is a disgraceful way to conduct Islam, this is no choice at all – Bukhari is a mighty scholar of hadith but has no madhab, no book of aqeeda in short, he is not even a jurist. Apart from the fact that Abu Hanifa and Malik, as well as Shafi are Bukharis’ seniors in even hadith as they set up the principles of this science, unlike Bukhari, they also set up the science of fiqh, creed, were eminent logicians and mutakallims. Imam Bukhari did not pretend to engage in these disputes with them, and if he did, where is his madhab and his book of fiqh? As we shall see later, he did not concern himself in his ‘Sahih’ even with how to pray the compulsory daily prayers, as he deferred to the senior Imams in this.

This trick of elevating their favourite muhadditheen or scholars above the Sahabah or Salaf is repeated by the Ahl al Hadith for latter day entities such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Nassiruddin Albani, who they again allow to second guess the Salaf on aqeeda, fiqh and hadith respectively.

In any case, the matter has been settled in the favour of the jurists (at least for Sunni Muslims) because elevating the Sahih to ‘certainty’ can cause serious problems as will become evident later.

The old dispute has been underscored such that there is no hadith without first understanding fiqh – in short, the people of creed and jurisprudence – who are polymathic, have seniority over the people of Hadith alone:

Al-Shâfi`î (himself a Muhadith and apart from Ahmad the most partial of the schools to hadith) narrated that Mâlik ibn Anas was told: “Ibn ‘Uyayna narrates from al-Zuhrî things you do not have!” He replied: “Why, should I narrate every single hadîth I heard? Only if I wanted to misguide people!” (iv)

Ibrâhîm al-Nakha`î (teacher of Imam Abu Hanifa, a Salaf and muhadith himself) said: “Truly, I hear a hadîth, then I see what part of it applies. I apply it and leave the rest” (v) (vi) Shaykh Muhammad `Awwâma commented: “Meaning, what is recognized by the authorities is retained while anything odd (*gharîb*), anomalous (*shâdhdh*), or condemned (*munkar*) is put aside.”

Hujjat al-Islâm al-Ghazâlî (a Shafi) in *al-Mustasfâ* and Imâm Ibn Qudâma (Hanbali and Muhadith) in *Rawdat al-Nâzir* both said that an `Âlim may be an Imâm in a particular science and an uneducated common person in another.

Thus it has been agreed that knowledge of Hadith alone does not make one omni-competent in Islamic sciences: without any insult, one can compare the superior Muhaditheen to the great historians – their exacting standards in checking and authenticating information do not however make them competent in other fields such as theology or fiqh. Another way to put it is that there is more to Islam than Hadith studies – a lot more. Nor are hadith even the most important sources in Islam – that would be the Quran and then usool of tafsîr, since the Quran is the protected source text of Islam. And before even that, God commands the use of the intellect to come to the right conclusions about which religion to follow.

It is easy to understand: we would not allow, even today, the greatest historians to pronounce on physics nor vice versa, unless they were polymaths. Gibbon would never dare argue with Maxwell on Electromagnetism, no mater his pre-eminence as a historian. But sadly, this is all too common in Islam, with the Muhaditheen often resorting to the most base insults against the jurists. The polymaths of Islam were the fuqaha, not the muhaditheen, the earliest and greatest of whom was Abu Hanifa, as Imam Shafi conceded, ‘All Islamic jurisprudence is from him’.

Many of even the greatest muhaditheen were not qualified to give fatwas or deferred to the Imams of Creed and Fiqh. However, there were many who did offer an opinion, based only on hadith and their literal meanings, and these had a huge problem with Abu Hanifa and Malik:

Ibn `Abd al-Salâm said: “Most hadîth scholars are ignorant in *fiqh*.” – 90% according to Anas ibn Sîrîn – among the *Salaf*. So now what is left for the latter day Muhadditheen? (vii)

Imam Al-Dhahabî (again, a muhaddith himself) said: “*The majority of the hadîth scholars have no understanding, no diligence in the actual knowledge of hadîth, and no fear of Allah regarding it.*” (*al-Sakhâwî, al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar* (p. 18)) All of the authorities al-Dhahabî listed as “those who are imitated in Islâm” are Jurisprudents and not merely hadîth masters.

Al-Sakhâwî in his biography of Ibn Hajar entitled *al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar fî Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islâm Ibn Hâjîr* states that al-Fâriqî said: “One who knows chains of hadîth but not the legal rulings derived from them cannot be counted among the Scholars of the Law.”

His student Ibn Abî `As.rûn (d. 585) also followed this view in his book *al-Intisâr*. [Al-Sakhâwî, *al-Jawâhir wa al-Durar* (p. 20-23)]

When you encounter people of Ahl al Hadith and Salafis, they will fail to show you a single reference from the Salaf or the Mujtahid Imams saying that you must follow all hadith that are ‘Sahih’ without question as long as the chain is ‘sahih’. They will talk about consensus (ijma) but none will be demonstrated. In fact, it is clearly stated by the scholars that hadith is misguidance without checking them:

Ibn Abî Zayd al-Mâlikî reports Sufyân ibn `Uyayna as saying: “Hadîth is a pitfall (*madilla*) except for the fuqahâ,” and Mâlik’s companion `Abd Allâh ibn Wahb said: “Hadîth is a pitfall except for the Ulema. Every memorizer of hadîth that does not have an Imâm in fiqh is misguided (*dâll*), and if Allâh had not rescued us with Mâlik and al-Layth [ibn Sa`d], we would have been misguided.” (viii)

Imam Ahmad’s teacher, Yahya ibn Sa`id al-Qattan, despite his foremost status as the Master of hadîth Masters, would not make rulings from hadith but followed in this the fiqh of Abû Hanifa

as he said bluntly: “We do not belie Allah. We never heard better than the juridical opinion (*ra’i*) of Abû Hanîfa, and we followed most of his positions.” (ix)

Here is where ‘Blackmail by Bukhari’ occurs: surely all this does not apply to *Bukhari*, right?

Surely Bukhari was at the same rank as the ‘Mujtahid Mutlaq’ (x) Imams who set up the madhabs? If he of all people narrates a hadith, we have to follow it, right?!

Wrong.

He never claimed to be Mujtahid [here is a sample ranking of Islamic scholars within traditional Sunni Islam, which of course the Ahl Al Hadith reject and make the only qualification for being an authoritative scholar knowledge of hadith alone – see (x)] Nor did he himself say that it is necessary to act on all of his hadith. Nor did he claim to be setting up his own school of aqeeda (creed) or Fiqh. *He is an Imam of hadith only.*

If we are to ‘follow’ Bukhari or muhaditheen to the neglect of Sunni Islam and these Imams’ own advice and assertions then we should know that ‘imam’, in English, can be translated as ‘one who guides’ or ‘one to follow’. So since people would have us follow Imam Bukhari and his ‘school’ even though he did not tell us to, then lets attempt this.

First of all, we would have to give up calling ourself ‘Salafis’ or followers of the Salaf since Imam Bukhari is from *long* after those generations (he was born 194 years AH and did not complete Bukhari till near his death – in fact he left it unfinished so it was interpolated by two other authors, so the final draft is from even later). We also have to admit that we have no school from neither the Sahabah or Tabaeen (this honour falls only to Abu Hanifa nee 63 AH, though his enemies amongst the muhaditheen try to make it later). The Salafis of course will try to allege that the ‘school’ is in the hadith. Lets see if this is true momentarily.

Also, we do not have *any* books of hadith from the Salaf or the Tabaeen accepted into the ‘six sahihs’ by the Ahl al Hadith, so we find ourselves in a similar position to the Christian scriptures, where the important narrations were not sorted out or put to paper until at least 200 years after Hijri. Of course, there was a oral tradition, but the ‘necessary’ input of authentication

by Imam Bukhari and Muslim etc had to wait for nearly three centuries, and until then people were supposedly in a confused state. We then also have to pick between Bukhari and Malik: he narrated only a thin book of hadith, unlike the 4-5000 in Bukhari – his ‘Muwatta’ is a short volume, easily read in a day or two and not even composed entirely of hadith – there are many pages of judgements and he judges against some of the hadith he himself narrates.

There are two options:

Malik (and the Hanafis before him who collected hadith) are negligent and failed to pass on or even write down the essential hadith which we needed

or

they did indeed pass on what is needed and Bukhari and others were collecting additional material for historical purposes only.

The other option is that the Imams of fiqh were ignorant of hadith and we had to wait for Bukhari to come along. Or, Bukhari includes, for the historical record or his own reasons, hadith which they rejected as non-applicable despite their being Sahih.

But if we use Imam Bukhari or muhaditheen alone, despite the fact that he was following others in law and aqeeda and notwithstanding his personal idiosyncrasies in fiqh, and ignoring the fact that he did not even claim to set up a school of creed or jurisprudence, we should at least be able to find the details for our beliefs and practices in his or other muhaditheens' books, right?

Wrong.

Where, for example, does Bukhari narrate how to pray a single rakat (cycle) of Salat (the five daily prayers) to completion? Or the numbers of the components of the five different prayers? Or the comprehensive non-conflicting accounts of their timings? (the answers are in fact spread out all over the books of fiqh and hadith and most of the relevant hadith are not ‘Sahih’).

So Imam Bukhari makes no effort to show us even how to pray a single rakat (probably as he knew this was not needed as people would not be so foolish as to take his book as a reference as opposed to a historical record or manual of hadith) and yet we are supposed to follow ‘sahih’ hadith no matter what?

Ahl al Hadith will say that omissions from his book, even on so important an issue as prayer, do not mean we leave the rest of the ‘sahih’ hadith. They will argue that leaving a Sahih hadith is ‘bid’at’ (innovation or heresy). But which Imams of creed or even fiqh said that? In fact the position is that Imams and suitably qualified people *did* indeed leave or not act on hadith, in either their literal meanings, or believed them to be abrogated or ‘strange’ in matn.

Hanafis such as Isa Ibn Abban rejected swathes of Ahad narrations and although the grounds for rejecting the ahad Sahih vary between Ahlus Sunnah (the Hanbalis are most reluctant to reject any), it is valid to reject an ahad in meaning or content with a reason, the problem only comes if I reject one for no reason at all. But here again Salafis will try to confuse you: they will have to admit that the Sahih can be rejected, since their own Imam of Hadith, Nassaruddin Albani rejected many, but they will assert that hadith can only be rejected on the grounds of their chain and not their apparent meanings.

This is again a lie and mere sophistry, but we will come back to this.

The unfortunate result of ‘Bukhari blackmail’ is to encourage people to question the intentions of Imam Bukhari, set up a conflict between him and the Fuqaha (to a greater extent than was the case) and to ultimately encourage people along the vile and dangerous path of hadith rejection by making them think that every narration must be taken into belief: beliefs, such as ‘does God have a son?’, can only be on certainty – you cannot be 90% sure in Islam, only 100% will do. So how can taking ‘Ilm ul Zaan’ or ahad narrations (both probabilistic knowledge only) into matters of belief be appropriate?

Sadly, confusion and posturing abound from Ahl al Hadith – apart from failing to show how to pray from Sahih hadith alone, they make bizarre claims that Imam Bukhari himself did not make: for example, not all of the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari are of one grade – ‘Sahih’: however, they will never tell you the actual facts, leaving Christians and atheists to come up to

you and tell you that the ‘hadith is in Bukhari and sahibh and thus you must accept it!’ – when in fact some of Imam Bukhari’s own hadith do not meet his conditions and he merely adduces them as supporting evidence for the main hadith of the chapter:

*“Auxiliary narrations served to bolster the authenticity of the Prophetic tradition, but neither Bukhari or Muslim felt the need to meet their usual rigorous standards for authenticity when dealing with them”* (xi)

So the actual percentage of Sahih al Bukhari which is ‘Sahih’ according to his conditions is not all of it but only the main chapter heading hadiths only – the others may sometimes not be (some scholars give a figure of 1/3 of his hadith meet his condition, others less). There is much confusion about this and Imam Dhahabi (yes, he is a muhaddith too) expresses it thus:

*“They are all Sahih, but not all of them reach the same high degree of Sahih”* (xii)

The danger of harassing Muslims by insisting that hadith is ‘Sahih’ so *how dare* you not believe in it or follow it is manifest in the fact that it is not only hadith narrations which can be Sahih (and nor are by any means all or even most sahibh hadith and narrations in the collections of Bukhari and Muslim. Again, this is a consensus of Sunnis and admitted by Imam Bukhari in the full title of his Sahih – which is called the ‘Short version of the book’) – the ‘Satanic Verses’ incident is graded as Sahih by hadith masters such as Ibn Hajar and historians such as Imam Tabari (also a hadith master and faqih, though his school is currently lost) alike – but they knew and articulated clearly that *being sahibh did not mean ‘true’ but merely that the chain was correct – the content and meaning could well be rejected*, as it is in this case. But a person nowadays, suitably mislead by the Salafi movement could be incited, as Ibn Taymiyyah was, to mistake it’s ‘sahih’ status for it’s acceptability and thus to believe that the Prophet compromised on the issue of monotheism (xiii) – an impossibility rejected by all orthodox Muslims.

You would think the incident of the ‘Satanic verses’ or the ‘hadith of the cranes’ as it is known would be sufficient to deter the Salafis from endangering people’s Iman by threatening them with ‘Bid’at’ or heresy if they fail to accept any and all sahibh narrations, but no such luck.

They will retort with the deceptive claim that none of the hadith masters rejected the sahih hadith – that is not true: they were rejected openly such as the Satanic Verses incident (except by Ibn Taymiyya, who is in fact not found amongst the lists of senior hadith masters anyway).

What these individuals are trying to fool you with is *the fact that they were rejected did not make them ‘not sahih’*, as that *only relates to their chain but not their truthfulness* (since these two concepts are identical to many Salafists and all Ahl Al Hadith, they try to equate them in your mind as well).

However, the scholars of Islam were under no such illusions, and Imam Bukhari was well aware of the criteria of fallibility as prescribed in the Quran for all works of man and muhadditheen: *‘Will they not then ponder on the Qur’an? If it had been from other than Allah they would have found therein much incongruity.’ [4:82]* – this states clearly that all works other than those of God are plagued by contradiction.

So although the issue of the Satanic verses should be enough to deter people from ‘Hadith is sahih brother, how dare you go against it!’, it will be necessary here to show that Imam Bukhari and others narrated hadith which they knew would not be acceptable in Islamic fiqh or aqeeda but that they were documenting only – their lack of endorsement or explanation of these narrations demonstrates that sufficiently

Bukhari 18. *‘What one is cautious about in bad luck in a woman’:*

4805. *It is related from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “There is bad luck in women, houses and horses.”*

4806. *It is related that Ibn ‘Umar said, “They mentioned bad luck in the presence of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “If there is bad luck in anything, it is in houses, women and horses.”*

This story is found in a number of ways in various hadith collections: the first narration clearly claims that there is such a thing as bad luck and the second says ‘if’ thus leaving the question open. Obviously there is no such thing as bad luck and least of all in women – this absence of

superstition in Islam is confirmed in Bukhari itself. Yet Imam Bukhari narrates the hadith here without comment or explanation and again in ‘Adab wal Mufrad’ (his text on Islamic manners). A person picking this up would be shocked and confused, especially as Imam Bukhari omitted the explanation of hadrat A’isha where she explained that Ibn Umar had missed out the phrase that The Prophet said ‘The *ignorant people believe* that there is bad luck...’

Imam Ahmad, who checked and approved of Imam Bukhari’s ‘Sahih’, did include that narration of A’isha (RA): so the options are that Imam Bukhari wants you to believe that women are bad luck (impossible) he narrates contradictory hadith (which is fine as long as he is not narrating them for the purpose of acting on them or believing in them) or you are not to act, believe in or even read as a layman every hadith in Bukhari (or Imam Bukhari expects you to know all of the other narrations which he neglected to include, presumably because he did not consider them authentic or was negligent, which would also be inappropriate).

Sahih Bukhari, Narrated Aisha:

*“Allah’s Apostle heard a man reciting the Qur’an at night, and said, “May Allah bestow His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such Verses of such-and-such Suras, which I was caused to forget.”*

Obviously, no-one is saying you should believe in this, or it could lead one to think that the Prophet forgot parts of the Quran, which is clashing with Quran and aqeeda.

But Imam Bukhari does not provide any explanation – having narrated it, it is left to the Imams of Fiqh and Aqeeda to sort out, and they of course reject it. There is no question of ‘following the hadith’.

Again, from Bukhari via Abu Huraira:

*“The angel of death was sent to Moses and said ‘respond to your Lord’...Moses slapped him severely, knocking out one of his eyes. The angel went back to his Lord, and said, “You sent me to a slave who does not want to die.” Allah restored his eye and said, “Go back and tell him to place his hand over the back of an ox,*

*for he will be allowed to live for a number of years equal to the number of hairs coming under his hand... (continues)"*

Now a person reading this narration without knowing that not all sahih are taken into belief etc would be most confused: it has been addressed in detail by Islamic scholars (a good treatment in Arabic is by Muhammad Al Ghazzali for those interested). It is clearly related in the Quran that the time of death of any person will not be postponed and in any case it is unacceptable for a Prophet to reject death and refuse to meet God. It would also seem strange that angels are creatures that can have their eyes knocked out by humans. Various explanations have been offered by scholars such as Qadi Iyad and hadith scholars such as Ibn Khuzayma, who said that perhaps Moses mistook the Angel of Death for an assassin. These explanations are in themselves problematic due to the text of the hadith, but the point here is that it is narrated *without explanation* and has *no relevance to practise or doctrine* – inflicting it on people as if Imam Bukhari meant for them to act on or believe it can cause serious confusion.

Narrated 'Imran bin Husain: "*The Verse of Hajj-at-Tamatu was revealed in Allah's Book, so we performed it with Allah's Apostle, and nothing was revealed in Qur'an to make it illegal, nor did the Prophet prohibit it till he died. But the man (who regarded it as illegal) just expressed what his own mind suggested. That man was Umar.*"

This will likewise, without the explanation of the scholars, which Imam Bukhari does not provide, cause confusion and make someone believe that Umar (RA) makes things up off the top of his head – the hadith requires commentary and could cause confusion without it. 'Following the hadith of Bukhari' does not help here either.

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 1.251 Narrated by Abu Salama: '*Aisha's brother and I went to 'Aisha and he asked her about the bath of the Prophet (saws). She brought a pot containing about a Sa' of water and took a bath and poured it over her head and at that time there was a screen between her and us.*'

What is the point of telling people to accept stories such as this? Imam Bukhari is clearly documenting for the purpose of historical record a story even as strange as this (in fact it is rejected by Hanafis and omitted by Malik and Shafi). In its literal meaning it implies that Aisha

had a bath behind a screen to demonstrate how to do ghusl – but this is impossible for our mother A’isha! Various glosses have been presented, but none are of any use and the hadith is a favourite of Shia; if she was to demonstrate the ghusl, she had no need to undertake it in front of them, it is impossible for the screen to be transparent so what is the point of this narration other than for it to be used against those who disparage our noble mother Ai’sha? Will the Ahl al hadith go around telling people this hadith is in Bukhari so we must accept it? Or one of their bizarre explanations (admitting that this happened but that she was fully clothed, which would still be unacceptable or that she merely had the bath, in which case what was the point of having them witness it). Enforcing this hadith is of no value and the Hanafis dealt with it appropriately by rejecting it despite the ‘Sahih’ status.

Bukhari 3:49 863, Narrated Al-Bara’: ”*When the Prophet intended to perform ‘Umra in the month of Dhul-Qada, the people of Mecca did not let him enter Mecca till he settled the matter with them by promising to stay in it for three days only. When the document of treaty was written, the following was mentioned: ‘These are the terms on which Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle agreed (to make peace).’ They said, “We will not agree to this, for if we believed that you are Allah’s Apostle we would not prevent you, but you are Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.” The Prophet said, “I am Allah’s Apostle and also Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.” Then he said to ‘Ali, “Rub off (the words) ‘Allah’s Apostle’ “, but ‘Ali said, “No, by Allah, I will never rub off your name.” So, Allah’s Apostle took the document and wrote, ‘This is what Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah has agreed upon*

Taken literally, it means the Prophet could not only read but write as well – this narration is beloved of Christian missionaries, but again, it is rejected by scholars and the explanation is found later on in Bukhari – what actually happened is clarified in the following two ahadith. Ali refused to honour the Prophet’s request & the Prophet struck that part out himself. He did *not* write as mentioned in Bukhari, 3:863

Narrated Al-Bara bin ‘Azib: *When Allah’s Apostle concluded a peace treaty with the people of Hudaibiya, Ali bin Abu Talib wrote the document and he mentioned in it, “Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle .” The pagans said, “Don’t write: ‘Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle’, for if you were an apostle we would not fight with you.” Allah’s Apostle asked Ali to rub it out, but Ali said, “I will not be the person to rub it out.” Allah’s*

*Apostle rubbed it out and made peace with them on the condition that the Prophet and his companions would enter Mecca and stay there for three days, and that they would enter with their weapons in cases.*

However, Imam Bukhari yet again does not explain – this is because these narrations are not meant to be taken in the way the Salafis and Ahl Al Hadith tell you to. Unless they are saying that we are to work out what Imam Bukhari means without him telling us – in which case we need *another* Imam and so on ad infinitum.

Sahih Muslim, Kitab Ar-Radaa' A'isha (RA) reported: *Sahla bint Suhail came to Allah's Prophet and said: Messenger of Allah, I see on the face of Abu Hudhaifa (signs of disgust) on entering of Salim (who is an ally) into (our house), whereupon Allah's Prophet (SAW) said: Suckle him. She said: How can I suckle him as he is a grown-up man? Allah's Messenger smiled and said: I already know that he is a young man 'Amr has made this addition in his narration that he participated in the Battle of Badr and in the narration of Ibn 'Umar (the words are): Allah's Messenger laughed.*

Will the unhinged members of the Salafi ranks go around demanding that Imam Muslim meant for this to be applied or that it in fact actually *happened*? It is clear by now that people who will insist in the Satanic Verses will not stop at this either, but Imam Muslim is surely collecting the narrations as a historian is wont to do – he cannot be asking us to believe in it. In any case, the hadith is rejected for obvious reasons.

Abu Dawood: 4723: *It was narrated from Al-Walid bin Abi Thawr, from Simak, from 'Abdullah bin 'Amirah, from Al-Ahnaf bin Qais, from Al-'Abbās bin 'Abdul-Muttalib, who said: "I was in Al-Batba' with a group of people, among whom was the Messenger of Allah . A cloud passed over him, and he looked at it and said: 'What do you call this?' They said: 'As-Sajāb (a cloud).' He said: 'And Al-Muzn (rain cloud)?' They said: And: 'Al-Muzn.' He said: 'And 'Anān (clouds)?'" They said: 'And Al-'Anan.' – Abu Dāwud said: I am not very certain about Al-'Anān – "He said: 'How much (distance) do you think there is between heaven and earth?' They said: 'We do not know.' He said: 'Between them is (a distance of) seventy-one, or seventy-two, or seventy-three years, and between it, and the heaven above it is the same (and so on)' – until he had counted seven heavens. 'Then above the seventh heaven there is a sea, between whose top and bottom is a distance like that between one heaven and another.*

*Then above that there are eight mountain goats' The distance between their hooves and their knees is like the distance between one heaven and the next. Then on their backs is the Throne, and the distance between the bottom and the top of the Throne, is like the distance between one heaven and another. Then Allah is above that, may He be blessed and exalted."*

This is a particularly embarrassing hadith for the Salafis, especially as Ibn Taymiyyah graded it as ‘acceptable’, but the idea of God being carried on wild goats (or carried at all) is heretical – the hadith, despite being narrated in many collections and graded as Sahih by at least Ibn Khuzayma and Ibn Taymiyya, is rejected for naked anthropomorphism and for sounding eerily familiar to God riding a cherub in the Old Testament. Are we to accept this bizarre and faith busting narration merely because it is graded as ‘sahih’ by some Hadith scholars?

Sometimes the ‘explanations’, which are outright lies in the cases presented, male the problem worse: (Original Arabic here:<http://futureislam.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/sunan-abu-dawud-volume-5-ahadith-4351-5274.pdf> A deliberate mistranslation where they interpolate ‘angels’ for ‘goats’ and truly awful and confusing explanation here: <http://islamqa.info/en/88746>)

Sunan Abu Dawood and Musnad of Ahmad: from Abu Huraira – *"The illegitimate child is the most evil of the three", meaning more evil than his parents"*

Once again, this is a confusing narration and there are others like it of various degrees of authenticity. Shall we follow it because some (including Salafis like Albani) say that it is ‘sahih’? Obviously not, as it clashes with the Quran and seems to promote the idea of ‘Original Sin’ – however, the explanation of Hadrat Ai’sha (namely that the hadith does not mean what Ahmad and Abu Dawood are narrating but warns the child against replicating the actions of his parents) was not included by the Muhaditheen, either for their own reasons or because it did not meet their conditions. Obviously, foisting this narration on someone and then telling them it is ‘sahih’ is going to cause major confusion – Hanafis and Malikis rejected it and muhaditheen who wanted to retain it were forced to offer their own explanations instead. But none of these explanations are in front of you when you read this narration – so what happened to following all Sahih narrations?

This narration is very useful in illustrating the Salafi mentality – after demanding that one accepts hadith, when a difficult one comes along, they resort to gymnastics and other sources to try and explain it: a funny strategy of theirs is to say that Albani did not accept so and so hadith or Ibn Baz rejected it in fiqh, as if their latter day 20th century Imams had to be awaited before clearing up important issues. And once again – they will try to give Muhaditheen exclusive rights to critique hadith for fear that the jurists would reject them – as indeed jurists were justified in doing so.

### **Sahih Muslim Book 19, Hadith Number 4322.**

Chapter : Permissibility of killing women and children in the night raids, provided it is not deliberate.

*It is narrated by Sa'b b. Jaththama that he said (to the Holy Prophet): Messenger of Allah, we kill the children of the polytheists during the night raids. He said: They are from them.*

Here is an interesting counter example – an effort has been made by Imam Muslim to explain the narration which could be misconstrued. He also takes care to put it after the section denouncing the killing of non-combatants. But once again, not knowing that no-one in Islamic history took this literally and that it was merely an understanding that accidental civilian deaths due to cavalry damage occurred due to mingling of civilians with combatants and were unavoidable but extremely regrettable, could lead the one who has been ‘blackmailed’ by hadith to conclude that ‘they are from them’ means it is licit to kill them as opposed to ‘they are mixed up with them’, which would have been a better translation. One can see how those of the ‘party of hadith’ predisposed to violence can easily be led astray by narrations without fiqh.

Then there is this flagrantly confusing narration in Bukhari (which is again a favourite of Shia): *”Narrated Nafi’: Whenever Ibn ‘Umar recited the Qur’an, he would not speak to anyone till he had finished his recitation. Once I held the Qur’an and he recited Surat-al-Baqara from his memory and then stopped at a certain Verse and said, “Do you know in what connection this Verse was revealed? ” I replied, “No.” He said, “It was revealed in such-and-such connection.” Ibn ‘Umar then resumed his*

*recitation. Nafi added regarding the Verse:—”So go to your tilth when or how you will” Ibn ‘Umar said, “It means one should approach his wife in ...”*

The ‘dot dot dot’ is not mine: it is in fact in the text of Sahih Bukhari: if we are to ‘follow all sahih hadith’, what do we make of this confusing narration? How do we act on this, especially as the narration exists in a full form with the same chain, that Imam Bukhari neglected to mention – thus the bit he missed out is: “*Approach the woman in her anus*” (**xiv**)

This narration is rejected by all Sunnis, and in any case, what is the point of narrating and incomplete and confusing passage such as this? Did Imam Bukhari mean for us to ‘follow it’ as Salafis and Ahl Al Hadith claim? Obviously not.

Sahih Bukhari, Kitab Al-Jihad Narrated Abu Huraira: *“Allah’s Apostle said, ‘Once Solomon, son of David said, ‘(By Allah) Tonight I will have sexual intercourse with one hundred (or ninety-nine) women each of whom will give birth to a knight who will fight in Allah’s Cause.’ On that a (i.e. if Allah wills) but he did not say, ‘Allah willing.’ Therefore only one of those women conceived and gave birth to a half-man. By Him in Whose Hands Muhammad’s life is, if he had said, ‘Allah willing’, (he would have begotten sons) all of whom would have been knights striving in Allah’s Cause.”*

Are we *really* expected to believe that Imam Bukhari expects us to believe in this shocking incident? In any case, how is it reconciled with a merciful God that Solomon, a Prophet, is punished for not saying ‘If Allah wills’ (which isn’t a sin in the first place) so severely by God? Then what chance do any of us stand? and why is God punishing the mother of the child and the child itself for something Solomon did? Does Imam Bukhari expect us to become Christians? Of course not – this narration was never meant by him to be ‘accepted’ in the manner Salafis and Ahl Al Hadith are doing.

Obviously, examples can be multiplied ad nauseum, but this should be sufficient: the next time people demand that you act on a hadith because the muhaditheen graded it as ‘sahih’, ask them about ‘acting’ on these narrations.

It can be seen that it is clear that (hopefully) the Muhaditheen were not collecting these for the purpose of acting on them or believing them but rather for the purposes of historical interest: none of them have any relevance to this life or the hereafter and if pursued lead to misguidance and confusion. But be warned – Salafis and Ahl al Hadith will nonetheless challenge you with outlandish explanations as seen for the hadith of ‘the Goats’, where they resorted to actually changing the words in translation and adding a whole sentence about angels that is not in the text.

You will also be constantly harangued with ‘show me anyone (they mean anyone they approve of) who rejected Sahih hadith’: be careful as they are playing with you – no-one rejected the hadith *as not being Sahih*, as in having an authentic chain. They did indeed reject them in meaning, application or truth, because contrary to what Ahl Al Hadith would like you to think, a Sahih hadith, having a perfect chain, can be rejected for its meaning. There is no reason to denounce it as ‘not Sahih’, as the chain never gave it certainty in the first place. These people have misguided many with this piece of sophistry and deception: it is not necessary to grade a hadith as ‘not sahih’ to reject it, in fact no-one ever did, since a hadith sahih in chain may be rejected by suitably qualified people for a valid reason.

Sahih does not mean ‘true’ or ‘definitely said by the Prophet’, so there is no need to tackle the hadith by saying ‘not sahih = not true’, since sahih did not mean true *in the very first place* (as explained by, as well as all other Sunni Muslims, Ibn Hajar in his introduction to his magisterial commentary on Sahih Al Bukhari).

Further, those who decide the rejection on content are not the Imams of hadith, who are experts in chains only (somewhat akin to modern day archaeologists or forensic historians), but rather the doctors of law such as Malik and Abu Hanifa, and they do indeed frequently reject Sahih narrations, some of which were shown above.

We also unfortunately need to combat here in more detail the nonsensical assertion that no hadith in Bukhari has ever been critiqued or challenged: this is utter sophistry, especially coming from Salafis whose Imam of hadith Albani actually not only questioned but despite his latter day status and numerous documented gaffes in hadith sciences, actually rejected a shocking number of hadiths from Bukhari and Muslim.

Recalling that the Imams of Sunni Muslims usually had no need to overtly reject Sahih hadith since they did not consider them to be anything other than probabilistic in the first place, their willingness to attack narrations in Bukhari would have perhaps pleased the academic in Imam Bukhari himself:

Not only do the Imams of Sunni Muslims question and indeed reject some narrations of the Sahih, so do the Mujassim Imams of the Salafis – Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Quyyum themselves – so what is the point of haranguing lay Muslims with ‘the Hadith is in Bukhari! How dare you question!’ – these arch-deacons of Salafism not only question but reject sahih from Bukhari:

Imam al-Bukhari writes:

*“Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘On the Day of Judgement when Allah Most High throws the people into the hell fire, it will say, ‘Give me more.’ Then Allah Most High will create a nation and then throw them into it. The hell fire will again complain, ‘I want more’, and again Allah Most High will create a nation and throw them into it. The hell fire will again say, ‘I want more’ and then Allah Most High will put His feet onto the hell fire and it will be full”*

[Bukhari, Kitab at-Tawhid, chapter on ‘Tawhid’]

Doctor Maximus of Hadith, Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani writes:

“Imam al-Bukhari has written this hadith in his tafsir of Sura Kahf. In this narration when the hell fire asks for more, Allah Most High puts His ‘feet’ onto it and then it will be full. Allah Most High is never cruel and yet in Abu Hurayra’s above narration it says that Allah Most High will create a nation and fill Hell with it. Hafiz Ibn Qayyim, Abu Hasan Qubsi and other groups of scholars of Hadith say that the narrator of this hadith has *fabricated* this by saying that Allah Most High will create a nation to fill Hell. They say that Allah Most High created Hell for those people who follow Satan, and that the new creation would never have sinned, so how could Allah Most High put them in Hell? Allah Most High also says in the Qur’an that He never does injustice to anyone (Sura al-Kahf verse 49).

*[al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, chapter on 'Tawhid']}*

Hafiz ibn Taymiyya writes:

“An authentic narrator sometimes makes mistakes, but knowledgeable scholars of Hadith find these mistakes straight away. For example, Imam al-Bukhari writes in *Kitab al-Tawhid* that Allah Most High will create a new nation and fill the hell fire with it. A master of Hadith will find out straight away if a narrator has made a mistake. These mistakes by narrators are also found in other Hadith books. Imam Muslim writes that when the Prophet (SAW) married his wife Maymunah, after he had taken off the ihram from himself, the Prophet (SAW) did not perform two rakat nafila inside the Ka’ba. A person with deep knowledge of Hadith will straight away know the narrator of this hadith has made a mistake because it is proved from another authentic hadith that the Prophet never performed ‘umra in the month of Rajab. When the Prophet married his wife Maymunah, he was wearing the ihram and he did perform two rakat nafil inside the Ka’ba.

*[Ibn Taymiyya, Usuli Tafsir, chapter 'Ijma al-Muhaddithun']*

Ibn Taymiyya writes also about Imam Muslim:

“Imam Muslim has written those types of narrations to which scholars of Hadith have objected e.g. Allah Most High made the skies and Earth in seven days and Abu Sufiyan asking our Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to marry his daughter after becoming Muslim. Another narration in the ‘Book of Salat’ indicates that our Prophet (SAW) had two sons called Ibrahim [when we know that our Prophet (SAW) had only one son called Ibrahim]

*[Ibn Taymiyya, at-Tawassul, 'Ulum al-Hadith and Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya, vol.18, chapter on 'Maqam Bukhari wa Muslim']*

Of course, Ibn Taymiyyah is as indirect and unclear as he always is but it seems that he has criticized Imam al-Bukhari’s and Imam Muslim’s narrations as well as Ibn Quyyum – and they are to be praised for their honesty and academic vigour in criticising a hadith that in fact supports their anthropomorphic beliefs.

Imam al-Bukhari writes:

*“After the death of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), Umm al-Mu’minin Sawda (may Allah be pleased with her) was the first to die”*

*[Bukhari, Chapter of Zakat]*

Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani writes that this is wrong, and that Umm al-Mu’minin Zaynab died first. Imam Ibn al-Jawzi says this narration is not correct and it is very strange that Imam al-Bukhari wrote this. Imam an-Nawawi also says that Imam al-Bukhari has made mistakes [*Fath al-Bari, ‘Zakat’*]

Bukhari: *‘Umar ibn Maymun said: “I saw a monkey who had just committed adultery with another one. Other monkeys then stoned them both, so I also started to throw stones as well”*

*[Bukhari, “Ayyam al-Jahiliya”]*

Hafiz al-‘Asqlani writes: “Allama Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Barr says: ‘This narration is wrong because enforcing an Islamic law on an animal regarding any matter would be wrong.’ Humaydi says that this account was not actually in the original Bukhari, *but someone has added it later*. Nusqi wrote the second version of Bukhari, and this narration was not written in it. If we were to say that Hafiz Humaydi and Ibn ‘Abdi’l-Barr are right, then what about the scholars who say that all the ahadith written in Bukhari are correct?”

*”[Fath al-Bari, “Ayyam al-Jahiliya”]*

Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim have said that the *War of Mustalaq happened in 4 AH as Musa ibn ‘Uqba has said. Ibn Ishaq has said that it happened in 6 AH. Mustalaq was in the war when ‘A’isha was falsely accused of a sin she did not commit. ‘A’isha has said that when she was falsely accused, the ‘Verse of the Veil’ was revealed. One day our Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was talking to some people and he said, “Some people have falsely accused my wife, but I can only see goodness in her.” From the evidence, Sa’d ibn Mas,*

*stood up and said, ‘If the person who has falsely accused your wife is from our tribe, I will kill him’*

*[Bukhari, Magazi; Muslim, Tawba]*

Hafiz al-‘Asqalani writes:

‘Imam al-Bukhari has said that the war of Mustalaq happened in 4 AH. *Imam al-Bukhari has made a mistake*, because the War of Mustalaq happened in 5 AH. I feel that Imam al-Bukhari wanted to write down 5 but he wrote down 4, because Imam al-Bukhari also wrote a hadith in the chapter on Jihad which proves that the war of Mustalaq happened in 5 AH. Secondly, the narration where Sa’d ibn Mas has said that he would kill the slanderer is also wrong. This is because Sa’d ibn Mas was martyred in the Battle of Khandaq (which happened before the War of Mustalaq).’ A’isha has said, ‘When I was falsely accused, the Verse of the Veil was revealed and it was revealed after the Battle of Khandaq’ “

*[al-‘Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, Magazi]*

It is very interesting that the same, very understandable confusion with numbers, if it is applied to the issue of the age of Ai’sha, namely that the ages given in the Sahih collections do not add up and she was older than nine at the time of betrothal, send Salafis into a rage of ‘modernist’ and ‘hadith rejecter’ – but here is Ibn Hajar saying that Bukhari and Muslim have their dates wrong – what of it?

People have not only felt free to fault the Sahih collections on their matn (recall the anger that Salafis feel on anything but criticism of the chain of transmission, but Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Quyyam were happy to critique the content or matn in the above narrations) but also even in the chains of narrations.

Before we get into that, it is important to know why people try to blackmail Muslims into accepting muhaditheen as the main authorities in Islam – namely to facilitate their heretical views on hadith. To this end, they will often point out that narrators such as Abu Hanifa and

Malik are considered weak by certain muhaditheen (they mean their favourites of course) and for this reason they do not narrate hadith from them – this is a gross deception.

But assuming it is true, why are we to accept the views of the opponents of the fuqahah, in this case the muhaditheen as being correct? One does not take the information from one side of a dispute only.

In fact, Hadith narrators such as Imam Bukhari and even earlier ones had serious problems with the Imams of fiqh, often making shocking statements about them – so when the Salafis tell you that Abu Hanifa and the Muwatta of Imam Malik are ‘weak’ in hadith, they do not tell you the following pertinent facts:

Imam al-Bukhari has stated:

*“Imam Abu Hanifa was a Murji'i”* (\*Murjis were a sect who believed that believing in God guaranteed paradise just as not believing it guaranteed Hell and thus actions were not of any benefit apart from those. The accusation of course, is false)

[*Al-Ta'rikh al-Kabir, under the 'Biography of Numan ibn Thabit'*]

Imam al-Bukhari also writes:

*“When Sufyan ath-Thawri heard news about the death of Imam Abu Hanifa, he said: ‘Praise be to Allah that such a man had died as he was gradually destroying Islam. There could not be a worse person born in Islam’ “*

[*Ta'rikh Saghir, Biography of Imam Abu Hanifa*]

Imam al-Bukhari also writes:

*“On two occasions Imam Abu Hanifa was ordered to repent from making blasphemous statements”*

[*al-Bukhari, Kitab ad-Daifa Walmat Rukin; Ibn 'Abdi'l-Barr, Al-Intiqal*]

Imam al-Bukhari informs us that he had taken these statements from his tutor Na’im ibn Hammad [Ta’rikh as-Saghir]

Imam al-Bukhari was so convinced by his tutor, that he never mentioned or used Imam Abu Hanifa as a reference for his book *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and accused him of only knowing a handful of hadith (a bizarre assertion).

So Imam Bukhari is not at all saying that Abu Hanifa is ‘weak’ but rather that he is an apostate (times two).

Imam ‘Abdullah ibn Mubarak (another noted Muhadith) said, *‘I don’t consider Imam Malik to be a scholar.’*

So before the lay Muslims are led to believe that they should doubt Malik or Abu Hanifa on hadith, it should be known that Ahl Al Hadith accept these kinds of narrations from individuals such as Na’im Ibn Hammad: One often finds both praiseworthy and very scathing statements about narrators and scholars – whereas Imam Bukhari (and Salafis) are happy to take Hammad’s word on Abu Hanifa, there is this about him, amongst other alleged calumnies:

*“Na’im ibn Hammad was a famous scholar from a region called Marau. He had sight in one eye only. During the later part of his life he went to live in Egypt. At first, he belonged to a sect called the Jahmites, and was an active member. He then later left this sect and wrote a book, which was the first book to use the science of Musnad. These were a compilation of narrations by the Sahabah, which were placed in an alphabetical order, according to whom they had narrated the hadith. During this particular period, the Umma used to question whether the Holy Qur’an was makhluj (created). When this question was put forward to Na’im ibn Hammad he did not give an explanation. He was then sent to prison along side Yaqub Faqia. He died in 228 AH. It was noted that no janaza [funeral prayer] was prayed over him and he was buried without a kaffan [shroud]”*

[*al-Baghdadi, Tadkirat al-Huffaz; adh-Dhahabi, Tahzib al-Tahzib; al-‘Asqalani and al-Baghdadi, Biography of Na’im ibn Hammad*]

So it is these kinds of tricks that are used by the Ahl Al Hadith to confuse converts and lay Muslims – if Muhaditheen are reluctant to narrate from Malik or Abu Hanifa due to doubts about them what about the doubts about less senior scholars from much after their time such as Hammad? Why are they not doubting them? The reason is obviously that they are in the ‘hadith’ gang and Abu Hanifa is persona non grata to them. So there is no need to give them final say on who Abu Hanifa or Malik are or are not.

In reality, we should not be fooled by the Salafi movement into being too partial to the ‘people of hadith’: scholars are human beings – they can get angry and they can err – this even happens to the Sahabah. In fact it is because of the power struggle between the narrators of hadith and the scholars of Islam that the former refuse to narrate from them and accuse and belittle them. It is indeed a great loss for Islam and its authenticity if we discard the two earliest Imams because some Muhaditheen had a problem with them. And as seen above, we cannot reconstruct Islam and fiqh and creed from the books of hadith alone. Or if we can, it is a very strange Islam, full of wild goats and inapplicable stories.

Further, it can be seen that the Muhaditheen not narrating hadith from the earliest collectors such as Malik is not due to scholarly rigour but animosity:

For example, we saw Imam Bukhari narrate a hadith from Imran Ibn Hattan above: but he was the head of the Khawarij sect and his poem exalting Ibn Moljam who assassinated Ali is famous. Yet Bukhari often narrates from him – but not from Hanafis. It may be, as some have said, that he does this from before the time he became a khawarij – but he certainly seems more accommodating of such people than might be considered proper given his harshness against Abu Hanifa, based on what a similarly unreliable person had claimed about him. Further, does not the fact that someone became a Khawarij render his earlier narrations suspect? At what stage did he become a Khawarij? And does Imam Bukhari give the same leeway to other deviant sects?

Imam Bukhari also narrates, as do other muhaditheen from Hariz Ibn Uthman who was known for cursing Ali (RA) seventy times before leaving the mosque. Ismail Ibn Ayyash narrated: “*I accompanied Hariz from Egypt to Makkah. On the way he kept cursing Ali. I said to him: How*

*can you curse someone about whom the Prophet (SAW) has said: “You are to me as Aaron to Moses?”* Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasai and others have narrated from him.

Imam Bukhari narrated over fifty three narrations from Uthman Ibn Abi Shaybah – who many Muhaditheen were willing to give the benefit of the doubt, unlike Malik or Abu Hanifa despite his being well known for making fun of the Quran and narrating *“Our Prophet attended a festival of non-believers and respected their idols the way they respected them. This is the reason why two angels refused to pray behind our Prophet”*. But this situation would never arise with our Prophet. Ibn Abi Shayba also used to interpret the Qur'an incorrectly and disrespected it by changing its words (xv). Zakariyya ibn Yahya ath-Thani Daraqutni claims he had no knowledge of Hadith and he used to tell unknown narrations. Hakim had said that he was weak and made many mistakes in narration. Al-Bukhari admits the scholars of Hadith have ignored him and did not take narrations from him at all. But Imam al-Bukhari has taken narrations from him regardless (xvi).

Accepting such a person and not accepting Abu Hanifa does not do wonders for Imam Bukhari's partiality.

The Muhaditheen that the Salafis want you to judge Malik and Abu Hanifa by are also willing to narrate from Imam Zuhri and Sufian Ibn Ouyana – who claim that some part of the Quran was lost in the battle of Yarmuk. Of course, that is their right, but it is not then a necessity for you to defer to them as to who is and is not Sahih vis-a-vis the Imams of Fiqh and aqeeda. With all of these people, you find good and bad narrations – the Muhaditheen *do not deny* that these people for example made fun of the Quran, but their sciences allow then to narrate from them. Likewise, the sciences of the Islamic logicians and jurists such as Malik allow him to reject such ‘Sahih’ narrations. If anything, the latter is the safer path.

Of course, our intention here is not to disparage the noble Imams of hadith, but rather to maintain the correct balance or ‘Al Qistas al Mustaqeem’ as Imam Al Ghazzali might say; the efforts of the Imams of Hadith are immense, but to put them above the fuqaha of the tabaeen and Salaf and allow them to insult them is incorrect and offensive, especially when the methodology of deviant sects today is to play into the hands of Shia, modernists and

missionaries by asserting that hadith has primacy over Fiqh or that Bukhari has primacy over Malik or Shafi or worst of all, Abu Hanifa. This is manifest stupidity.

Despite these very harsh statements and apparently strange narrations and narrators by the Imams of Hadith, Hanafis, Malikis, Shafis and others have been tolerant and rightly give the Imams of Hadith their due rank and respect.

At the same time, they reserve the right, due to their seniority and superiority in knowledge, to reject hadith (sahih or not) that clash with the Quran, or the noble character of the Prophets. Malikis reject freely those hadith which clash with the practices of Medina at the time as they question how a single chain narration could go against what all of the Companions and Successors were doing. Shafis reject any that do not meet their five conditions or clash with reality. Hanafis have a big list of conditions, over a dozen, and thus reject ahad that clash with Quran, Seera, observable reality, analogy and a big list of others (**xvii**). It is the fact that Hanafis and Malikis are most strict when it comes to attributing statements to the Prophet and that the Muhaditheen indeed had the most antagonism with them and they have paradoxically been accused by them of hadith rejection (and much worse as the quotes Bukhari etc show).

As I hope is obvious by now, people like Isa Ibn Abban and Abu Hanifa and Malik have very good reasons for rejecting the hadith they do, quite apart from their followers being accused of hadith denial or modernism (ironically it is the Ahl Al Hadith and the Salafis who hold honours for innovation and modernism with their ‘any hadith goes as long as it’s Sahih’ policy).

The real meaning of tolerance of different opinions is to not start accusing people when they have a different methodology to oneself – after all, everyone is willing to tolerate those who agree with them. Thus the madhabs must be free to apply their methodologies of hadith as they have from the very earliest days, indeed, from long before Bukhari, without fear of marginalisation or harassment.

The next time a man or woman with a scowl comes up to you, starts hurling hadith and insisting the hadith is ‘Sahih’ and you must follow it, tell them ‘the hadith that women are bad luck is sahih, do you accept it? Why do you look for a way out with narrations of Imam Ahmad? Do you accept that God rides seven wild goats? Why not, hadith is Sahih!?’.

Or ignore them and follow the correct methodology of the Madhabs and the greatest of Imams, Abu Hanifa (RA).

### **A Sample Dialogue For Students Harassed At University**

This is in no way to convince those who terrorise and misguide others under the banner of being the ‘party of Hadith’ (since people who believe that God rides on not one but seven wild goats are rather hard to convince), but rather to arm those Muslims and new Muslims who suffer from their onslaughts. This is not a ‘scholarly’ response but more of a rhetorical one – I have given some references as my limited knowledge allows in the main piece above and also a reading list by better qualified individuals below.

***‘You are saying that Sahih hadith can be rejected!’***

I’m not saying that, *everyone* is saying it.

Especially Sheikh Albani of the Salafi movement

***Sheikh Albani only rejected hadith due to their chains, in the traditional manner***

Where is your conclusive proof that rejecting hadith can only be due to their chains and further is confined to the muhaditheen only?

(\*this is in fact the actual position of Ahl Al Hadith and most Wahhabis/Salafis – if they do allow someone like Malik to reject a narration they will assert it was because of the chain only and because he was a Muhaddith. If Al Ghazzali or Maturidi reject a hadith, then they get the kind of treatment that Abu Hanifa got at the hands of Hammad i.e takfir)

Then if this is true, how come we had to wait for 1100 years for Albani to come along and weed out the non-sahih narrations of Bukhari and Muslim? If it was the ‘traditional style’, are you saying all of the scholars of hadith in between him and Bukhari were incompetent?

Then what guarantee do we have then that another scholar, even better than Albani won’t come along and remove more ‘weak’ hadith from Bukhari? How can you be sure that if Albani is

such a revolutionary genius (despite his obvious gaffes), another won't come emerge (possibly from outside your sect). Will you accept him? Or will he be a 'modernist hadith rejecter'?

### ***Sahih means you have to accept it!***

Sahih (in isnad) means it has a valid chain of transmission, that is all.

And even here there are differences between narrators, Bukharis 'sahih' is not the same as Tirmidhis 'sahih' etc.

It does not mean that the Prophet *definitely* says it or that it is verbatim what he said: it means that the probability is in favour of it being genuine unless there is a fault in its matn. Most hadith are not narrated *verbatim* but by *meaning* in any case, so it is rarely 'what the Prophet said'.

It is logically impossible (and no Sunni ever claimed) that each and every 'sahih' single chain narration between all of the different transmitters until the time of Bukhari some 230 years later is *verbatim* and not without *any* error: there are whole books by scholars discussing the faults and errors of the famous narrators of hadith, furthermore the Quran *demands* that all books aside from it are 'contradictory' ('*If it had been from other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.*' 4:82) and this includes the hadith collections – if not where is the explicit exemption? There are numerous hadith in Bukhari where the narrator says 'I am not sure if it was x or y' such as Sa'id and Anas disagreeing on the number of Prophet's wives (in a single narration). So how is it inerrant?

No one ever gave Sahih the criterion of infallibility: show us where it says this. Show us where any Sunni scholar claims that Ahad hadith is 100% certain knowledge.

And if according to Ibn Taymiyya and the Ahl Al Hadith, even the Prophets can forget and err (Allah forbid), then what about the narrators?

***You are misquoting the Quran – the thing about other books having errors does not apply to hadith books: since they are the commentaries on the Quran they are protected by God***

Then what about the commentaries and explanations of the Hadith books, namely the books of fiqh – are they protected too? And the commentaries on them? Ad infinitum?

Show your proof where Allah promises to safeguard any book but the Quran.

And if the commentaries on the Quran are solely in the books of hadith and not seera, science and grammar and history, why is the exegesis of the Quran still ongoing?

How come the exegetes were not all Muhaditheen? How many of the commentaries of the Quran are by Muhaditheen? Not many...

***You are insulting the narrators and the Sahabah!***

A cheap slur, but to be expected.

Not all of the narrators are Sahabah, many are from much later. And no one insulted the Sahabah – we do not have the hadith from *them* but from *the last person in the chain* or for example Bukhari 200 years later. And it has been clearly shown above that some narrators were highly criticised for insulting Ali, or lying about the Quran and saying it was changed: Imams such as those mentioned & Daruqutni challenged the chains of many of the above narrations.

Also, we know that there were many hypocrites in Medina, the names were known only to one sahabah (Hudhayfa Ibnil Yamman) – can you guarantee that no hadith are narrated from these people, who even the Sahabah did not know about?

***Imam Bukhari narrated the most hadith, therefore he is the most knowledgeable and most worthy to be followed***

Abu Huraira narrated thousands more hadith than Abu Bakr, Umar or Ali put together, does that mean he is better than them?

Your statement is as foolish as saying ‘so-and-so is an excellent historian, therefore we should let him fly the space shuttle’.

***The Imams of fiqh failed to narrate important hadith or were ignorant of them, therefore the muhaddiheen, of whom Bukhari is the greatest, had to fill this gap***

First of all, this means that you are not following the Salaf or a school of thought of the Salaf but the Imams of hadith – please show us their schools of thought and madhabs, as well as books of fiqh, proving the existence of God, full commentaries on the Quran etc.

Where is the evidence that Bukhari is a greater muhaddith than Abu Hanifa or Malik or Shafi? Just because he narrated more? So Stephen King is a better writer than Melville because he has written more books?

It could also be that the Fuqahah were aware of the narrations but did not pass them on, to avoid causing confusion as many of the above narrations do indeed cause, just as Abu Bakr destroyed a collection of 400 hadith from the Sahabah and Umar prohibited narrating hadith, saying ‘leave people with the book of God’. Are they ignorant of hadith too?

Further, it is clear that Bukhari was narrating to document things, not because he wished for them to be followed or believed: if so, once again, where is his madhab and his book of Creed, how to pray, his views refuting the Shia, Mu’tazzila, Murji’ah, and atheists?

### ***It is in his book***

He did not include how to even pray one rakat of salat, as he knew this was to be left to the fuqaha. Then what of the rest of the things?

Are we to extract them from the narrations?

So we need Imam Bukahri for the hadith and then *another* Imam to make the rulings from them (this is exactly what the Salafi movement has done with Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Baz, Uthaymeen etc.).

Why should I do this and follow these Imams when I can save myself the trouble and follow one of the others who are from the salaf and reliable like Malik?

***Because Bukhari and our Imams such as Ibn Taymiyyah have more knowledge***

So everyone was ignorant of how to pray, how to marry, have sex and circumcise themselves until Bukhari came along two hundred years later or Ibn Tamiyyah another five hundred years after him? How come the Ummah was left without the people to clear this up?

If there were others of ‘your school’, where is their madhab, school or even books? How come no-one is following them?

***The majority of people follow Imam Shafi and accept the hadith unless they go against his five conditions which are similar to those of Bukhari, so you have to follow the majority***

Do you mean ‘ijma’ (consensus) or ‘majority’?

If it is consensus, then there is a consensus that all of the hadith in Bukhari are ‘Sahih’ but not all of the hadith in it can be applied to possible judgements – that honour goes to ‘Muwatta’ of Imam Malik.

And anyway, there is no consensus that Bukhari is ‘the most reliable book’ – a big group of Malikis and Hanafis disagree, while asserting Imam Bukharis’ achievement is altogether Sahih in chain (but not matn).

In any case, it is not the method of traditional Islam to take an opinion poll of Shafi, Abu Hanifa, Ahmad etc and then follow the majority – that would mean we are knowledgeable enough to judge between them and obviate the need for taqleed (see (x)). Nor is this they way things are done as it would abolish all differences and the mercy of God therein. Rather, we are free to follow an Imam’s methodology in hadith, fiqh etc.

If your appeal is to consensus, then show it.

And on what basis do you then allow Ibn Tamiyyah to violate consensus on issues such as the Satanic Verses, the createdness of the universe and marriage and divorce, as well as Albani to violate it on the issue of there being weak hadith in Bukhari?

***I'm a Deobandi/Brelwi: we are told to act on hadith if it is sahih, and we are Hanafis so you are wrong, it is not just Ahl Al Hadith who disagree with you***

First of all, Deobandis do not follow the Hanafi mustalah of hadith but the Shafi one – as have many Hanafis for the past few hundred years – let us know from which books you have taken Usool of Hadith – they invariably will not be the Hanafi or Maliki ones. Further, the position of a madhab or school of law or belief is known from those who are in a position to narrate it, as shown by the gradings of scholars (**x**) and not what our favourite latter day Imams have said.

Show us the clear proof that rejecting a sahih hadith is not allowed: it is merely not allowed *without a valid reason* – the Imams of Fiqh and Creed furnished valid reasons and avoided problems by not narrating hadith which might cause confusion. The Muhaditheen, in their limited speciality, did not.

***Without Bukhari and other books we would not know the essentials of our religion***

First of all, who told you to do without Bukhari?

But which essentials of religion would you lose and where were they before Bukhari was written? If they were in other books *like* Bukhari, why have we lost those but yet have the books of Fiqh and Aqeedah from before him?

Neither Creed nor fiqh are contained in those books alone but are derived from the Quran and authenticated Sunnah (as opposed to Hadith alone) by the fuqaha.

Why do you need ‘Aqeedah Tahawiya’, ‘Al Fiqh Al Akbar’ or the Sanussi Creed or even the books of the Mujassims like Muhammad Abd Al Wahhab if it is all in Bukhari already?

***The Imams of Creed that you mentioned merely culled it from Bukhari and other Hadith books***

Then why did Imam Bukhari and Tirmidhi etc not do it themselves but followed other in Aqeeda (As'haris)? And some of the Imams named pre-date any of the Sahih collections anyway.

***All of the Sahih hadith are in Bukhari and Muslim***

No-one claims this within the Orthodoxy, and you are contradicted by Bukhari who called his Sahih the ‘short collection’ (**xi**), according to him, *most* of them are outside these collections.

***We don't need the others, they are not relevant or as strong as Bukhari***

No one says this either but then show me how to pray a rakat of Salat from Bukhari and Muslim alone

***You reject Sahih hadith based on your whims and to appease modernists***

I can just as easily say that you insist on accepting all of them on your whims and to appease your sect, which is *very* modern, but...

So were Imam Ahmad and Malik rejecting Sahih hadith to appease modernists when they did it?

No-one said that Sahih hadith can be rejected willy – nilly for *no reason* but in line with the Usool of hadith set up by the legitimate schools of jurisprudence.

And if you are so keen to accept ‘Sahih’ narrations, do you accept the narrations of illegitimate children going to Hell, of grown men being breast-fed in front of the Prophet or the Satanic Verses incident?

***I leave it to the scholars***

You mean, you leave it to your *chosen* scholars, which means you think you have the ability to judge them and choose your favourites, thereby actually you are following your own judgement (which is fine I suppose but at least be honest about it).

Let's hope the non-Muslims and Christians who seek to attack us by such narrations leave it to 'the scholars' too...

***I don't need Abu Hanifa and those guys: scholars of Haidth such as Zuhri provided explanations of all of those narrations you mentioned***

So why did the narrators not mention them in the places when and where they narrated them?

Did they assume that everyone knows all of the possibly thousands of narrations on each topic, is Mujtahid or has the books of all Muhaditheen open in front of them when they read a single hadith like the one about illegitimate children going to Hell?

If so, why are you bringing sahih hadith as proofs if it is beyond our capability to comprehend them or reconcile them?

***Then don't read them, leave them to scholars of hadith***

If I am to blindly follow anyone, why not the Fuqahah who have specialisation beyond hadith alone and are from the Salaf?

Why jump ship to the scholars of hadith?

***I see your point, but Bukhari and the Muhaditheen are the best in Hadith and Malik and Shafi are the best in Fiqh, none is 'better' than the others, leave it at that!***

So now you are saying that there is no benefit in being from the generation of the Salaf as Malik and Abu Hanifa are (despite the hadith of the Prophet praising these generations). Further, you have given up the view that Salaf are better than the later generations and made Bukhari equal in rank to Shafi or Abu Hanifa, something he himself never claimed.

Furthermore, you have made someone who set up the very branches of knowledge and initiated them equal to an expert in just one of those branches.

Most crucially, if there was no Abu Hanifa or Malik or Shafi or Ahmad to set up the sciences of hadith in the first place do you think you would even have a Bukhari to compare them to?

This is no different than asserting that the later generations were equal to the Sahabah. Absurd.

***We Ahl Al Hadith go back further, to people like Imam Zuhri***

So where is his madhab and books of creed, refutations of atheism etc?

***They all had their madhabs, but they are lost***

So it was not the best and most accepted madhabs that survived and made it to this day, we only have the degenerate ones, just as Shia brothers say?

And of course the ultimate ‘Hadou-ken’ finishing move of all Salafis and Ahl Al Hadith:

***You don't know Arabic!***

(and runs away, even if you are in fact a Phd in Quranic Arabic)

**(i)** Ibn Khaldun mentions the accusation that Imam Abu Hanifa knew only seventeen ahadith in his famous ‘*Muqaddima*’, writing that this accusation is completely false as Imam Abu Hanifa’s students Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad narrated a great number of ahadith from Imam Abu Hanifa which they have written in their books (*Kitab al-Athar* by Imam Abu Yusuf and *Kitab al-Athar* by Imam Muhammad – available in English). In fact, all of the narrations of ahadith are accumulated in *Jami’ al-Masaneed* by Imam Abu Hanifa – who is one of the first people to dictate books on Hadith/Fiqh. Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, etc. all came a *very* long time after him. This is why his status is the highest of all of them as from the famous scholars of Hadith/Fiqh he is the only one who is a Tabi’i (who have seen the Companions). This privilege was awarded to Imam Abu Hanifa only and not to Imam Malik, Imam Shafi’i, Imam Ahmad, Imam al-Bukhari or Imam Muslim.

- (ii) Narrated in ‘Sunnah of Abdullah ibn Ahmad’ (the son of Imam Ahmad)
- (iii) ‘History of Baghdad’ by Khatib Baghdadi
- (iv) al-Khatîb in al-Jâmi` li Akhlâq al-Râwî (2:109)
- (v) Ibn Abî Khaythama by Abû Nu`aym in the Hilya (4:225)
- (vi) Ibn Rajab in Sharh. `Ilal al-Tirmidhî (1:413)
- (vii) Ibn `Abd al-Salâm, al-Fatâwâ al-Mawsiliyya (p. 132-134)
- (viii) Ibn Abî Hâtîm in the introduction of al-Jarh. wa al-Ta`dîl (p. 22-23); Ibn Abî Zayd, al-Jâmi` fî al-Sunan (p. 118-119)
- (ix) Narrated by al-Dhahabî in Tadhkirat al-Huffâz. (1:307) and Ibn Hajar in Tahdhîb al-Tahdhîb (10:450)
- (x) 1. **Mujtahid Mutlaq** – Such as Imam Abu Hanifah (or Imam Malik etc) – the highest level and it is he who set up the Hanafi madhab (system of knowledge about religion). They articulate and prove first principles and base them on sound reasoning – so they elucidate the epistemology of that madhab. They should not follow any other scholars of their own or lower level and are not even allowed to do so since they are able to reason from said first principles. The requirement of intellect, memory and independent verification and peer review to reach this level is almost preposterously exacting by any system of knowledge; for example, knowing everything by heart which can include pieces of evidence ranging into the hundreds of thousands or even millions verbatim. Such people are thus exceedingly rare and none will be found to meet the required standard today (though many will claim it).
2. **Mujtahid Muqayyad** – such as Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad (Salafi brothers may disagree with me but this is due to their own antagonisms and novel methodology). Theoretically they shouldn’t leave the madhab and they can only use

the already established principles of the madhab to issue fatwa (rulings) about non-existing masail (new problems that need answers, like for example nowadays, the permissibility of organ transplantation). But in practice we do see them leaving the madhab from time to time.

**3. As'haab Tarjeeh** – examples would be individuals such as Qadikhan, Sarakhsî. It's those who can chose the stronger opinion if there is more than one opinion available within the madhab, by weighing the evidence for each position and choosing. But if there is only one opinion they are not qualified to leave that opinion. As well as if there is more than one then they are not qualified to take some opinion from outside of the madhab.

**4. Rawil-Madhab** – it's those who are trusted to narrate the mu'tamad (official) position of the Madhab.

(xi) Jonathan A C Brown, ‘Criticism of the proto hadith Canon’, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Journal of Islamic Studies, 15:1 (2004) Page 20, though Imam Muslim makes the same point in his introduction to Sahih Muslim.

(xii) Al-Muqiza (p. 80)

(xiii) <http://www.scribd.com/doc/28923302/Ibn-Taymiyya-and-the-Satanic-Verses>

(xiv) Fatah ul Bari Sharah Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8 page 190

(xv) Imam Adh-Dhahabi, ‘Mizan al-I’tidal’ and ‘Tadhkirat al-Huffaz’

(xvi) Imam Adh-Dhahabi, Mizan al-I’tidal; al-‘Asqalani, Tahzib at-Tahzib, Biography of Zakariyya ibn Yahya ath-Thani

(xvii) Al Mutasaar of Imam

## **FURTHER (BASIC) READING IN ENGLISH ON ORTHODOX SUNNI HADITH METHODOLOGY**

- 1) The Sunnah of the Prophet by Muhammad Al Ghazzali
- 2) The Canonisation of Bukhari and Muslim by Jonathan A C Brown
- 3) Towards Understanding Taqleed Darul Uloom Deoband (Volume I&II)
- 4) Losing My Religion by Jeffrey Lang
- 5) Albani and His Friends by GF Haddad